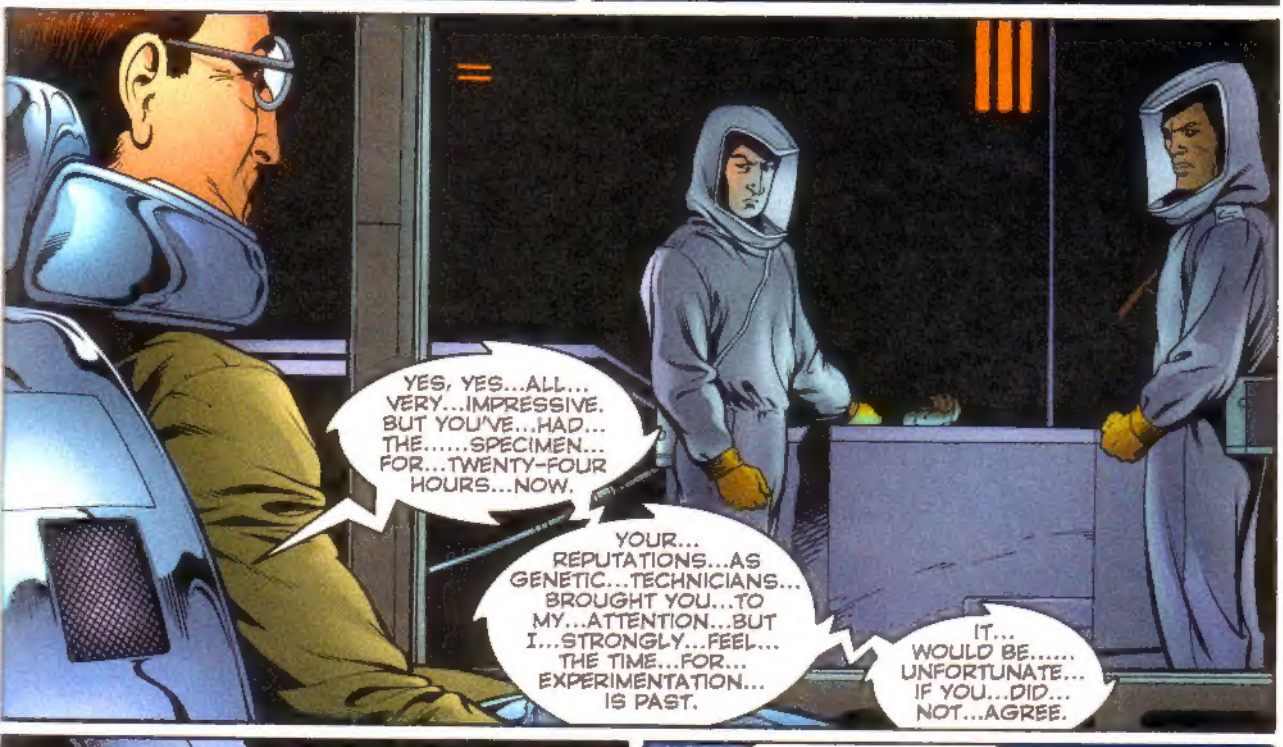
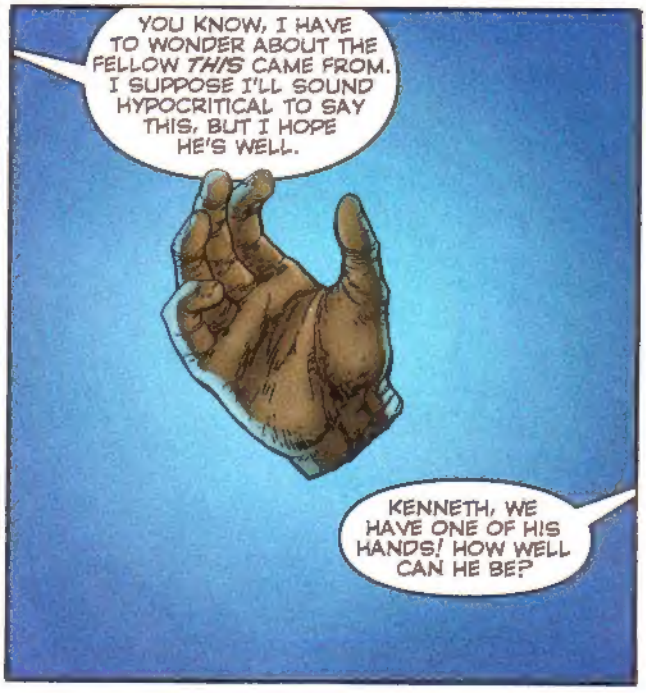
FRANK

IF THIS WORKS, IT WILL SUGGEST INDEPENDENT WILL IN EACH CELL. YOU REALIZE THAT?
IT WORKS. I'VE DONE IT THREE TIMES. WATCH!

VOILA'!
AND EVEN MORE INCREDIBLE, SCRAPINGS TAKEN FROM EACH TRANSFORMATION SHOW THAT CHEMICALLY IDENTIFIABLE PROTEIN-STRANDS REMAIN INTACT.
ASTOUNDING!


YES, YES...ALL... VERY...IMPRESSIVE. BUT YOU'VE...HAD... THE.....SPECIMEN... FOR...TWENTY-FOUR HOURS...NOW.
YOUR... REPUTATIONS...AS GENETIC...TECHNICIANS... BROUGHT YOU...TO MY...ATTENTION...BUT I...STRONGLY...FEEL... THE TIME...FOR... EXPERIMENTATION... IS PAST.
IT... WOULD BE..... UNFORTUNATE... IF YOU...DID... NOT...AGREE.

I--I *THINK* THAT WAS A THREAT, BUT WITH THAT MONOTONE VOICE-SIMULATOR OF HIS, IT'S HARD TO TELL.


YOU KNOW, I HAVE TO WONDER ABOUT THE FELLOW *THIS* CAME FROM. I SUPPOSE I'LL SOUND HYPOCRITICAL TO SAY THIS, BUT I HOPE HE'S WELL.
KENNETH, WE HAVE ONE OF HIS HANDS! HOW WELL CAN HE BE?

YEEEEE-HAAAAAAA!

"YEEE HA" THIS, GRUNGE!!!
YO, NO FAIR! YOU'RE USING YOUR GEN POWERS!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? YOU'RE MADE OF ROCK!
THAT'S DIFFERENT. I HAVE TO STAY THIS WAY. YOU KNOW THAT!
AND I HAVE TO STAY THIS WAY. I GOTTA BE ME!
THEN BE YOU SOMEWHERE ELSE, KID. YOU'LL SET OFF THE SPRINKLER SYSTEM.
SORRY MR. CASH, I WAS JUST KIDDING AROUND.
AS LONG AS YOU'RE IN WILDCATS' HQ THERE IS NO KIDDING AROUND. NOT LIKE THAT. CLEAR?

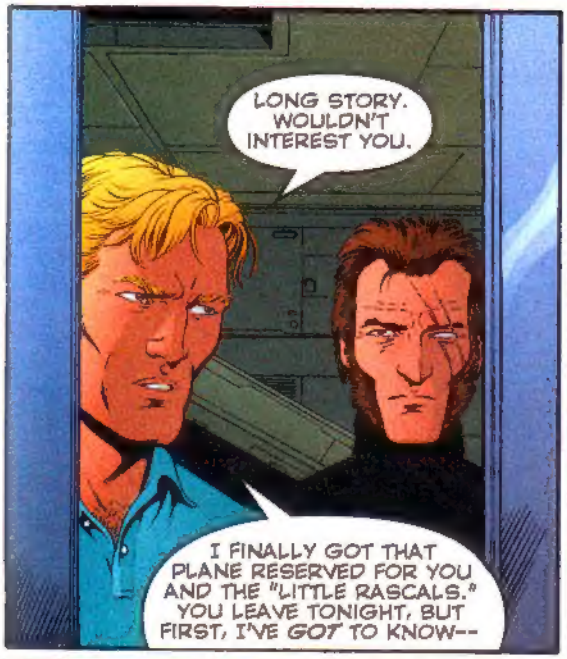
WAY TO GO, GRIFTER-MAN! PUT THAT BOY RIGHT IN HIS PLACE!

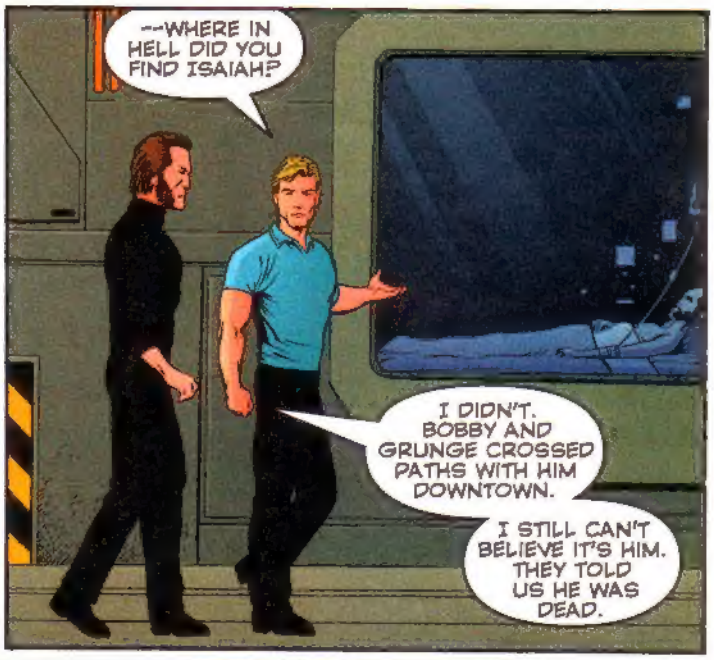
SKAK!

WHAT THE #@*% IS THIS!?
ERRRRR, WELL, YOU SEE I CAN FUSE MATERIAL TO MY BODY, MAKE IT ACT LIKE MY MISSING HAND...BUT NOT FOR LONG.
CAN I...CAN I HAVE THAT BACK?

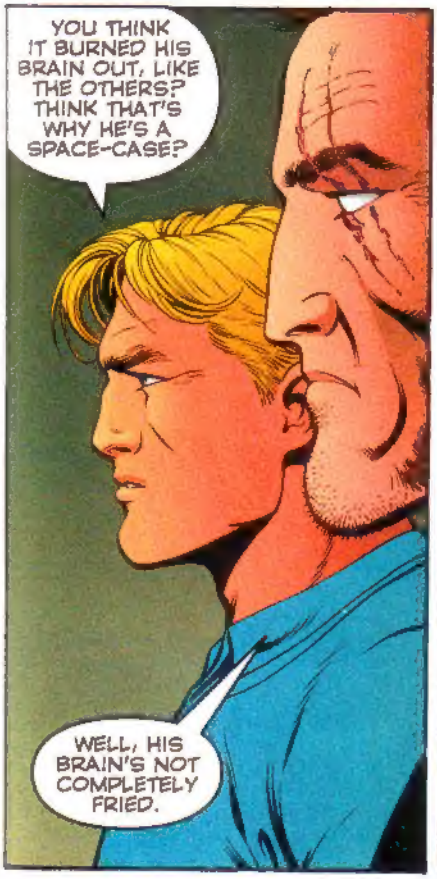
WEIRD!
LISTEN, COLE. THANKS FOR PUTTING ME AND THE KIDS UP, AND PUTTING UP WITH THEM.
AFTER THAT ATTACK ON OUR SAFE-HOUSE, I WASN'T SURE WHERE WE COULD TURN.

CUT IT OUT, LYNCH. YEAH, I HATE YOUR GUTS, BUT YOU KNOW YOU CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON ME.
NOT IF I CAN'T REACH YOU. I'VE BEEN TRYING TO CONTACT YOU FOR WEEKS. NOT A TRACE OF YOU ANYWHERE.
WHERE DID YOU DISAPPEAR TO?


LONG STORY. WOULDN'T INTEREST YOU.
I FINALLY GOT THAT PLANE RESERVED FOR YOU AND THE "LITTLE RASCALS." YOU LEAVE TONIGHT, BUT FIRST, I'VE *GOT* TO KNOW--


--WHERE IN HELL DID YOU FIND ISAIAH?
I DIDN'T. BOBBY AND GRUNGE CROSSED PATHS WITH HIM DOWNTOWN.
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S HIM. THEY TOLD US HE WAS DEAD.

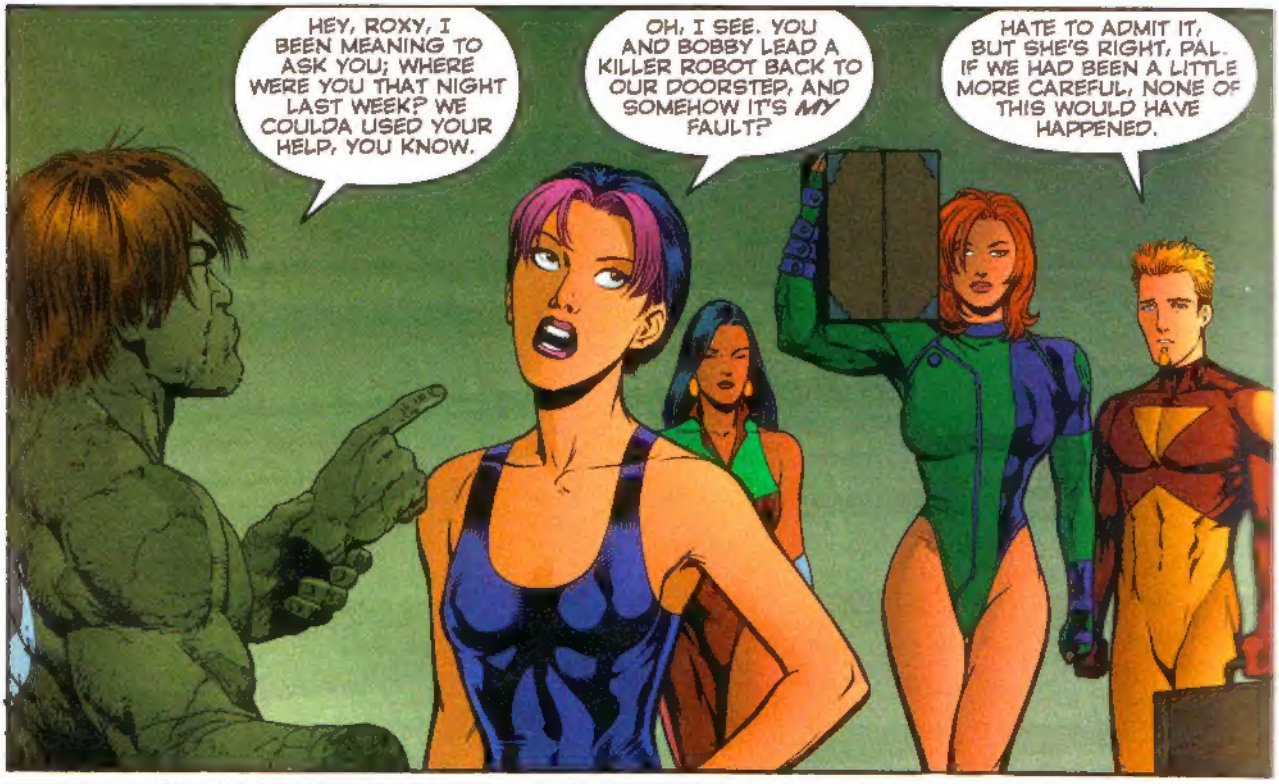
AND THEY TOLD US OUR EXPOSURE TO THE GEN-FACTOR WAS AN ACCIDENT. YOU *BELIEVE* THAT?
HE'S GOT IT TOO, YOU KNOW.
THE MOJO.
YEAH. I KNOW. IT REGISTERS ON THE LIFE-SIGNS MONITORS LOUD AND CLEAR.

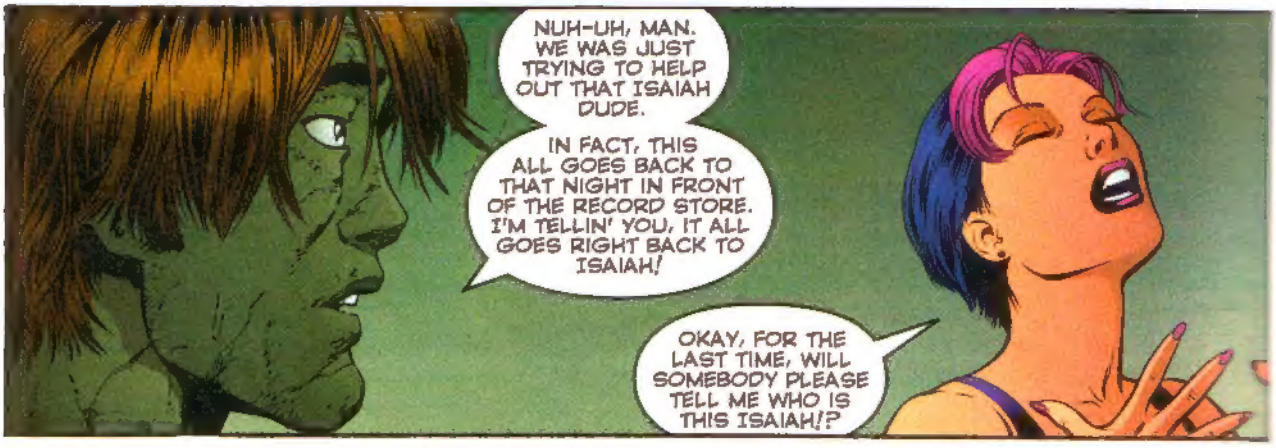

YOU THINK IT BURNED HIS BRAIN OUT, LIKE THE OTHERS? THINK THAT'S WHY HE'S A SPACE-CASE?
WELL, HIS BRAIN'S NOT COMPLETELY FRIED.

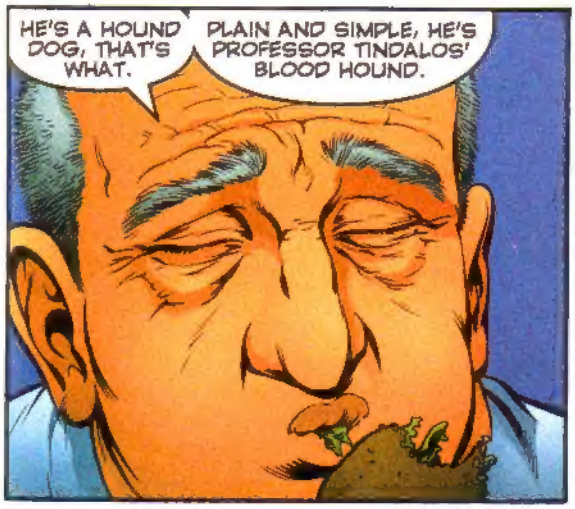
ACCORDING TO THE BOYS, HE ONLY COMES ALIVE WHEN A FIGHT STARTS--AND HE CAN STILL KICK SOME SERIOUS TAIL.

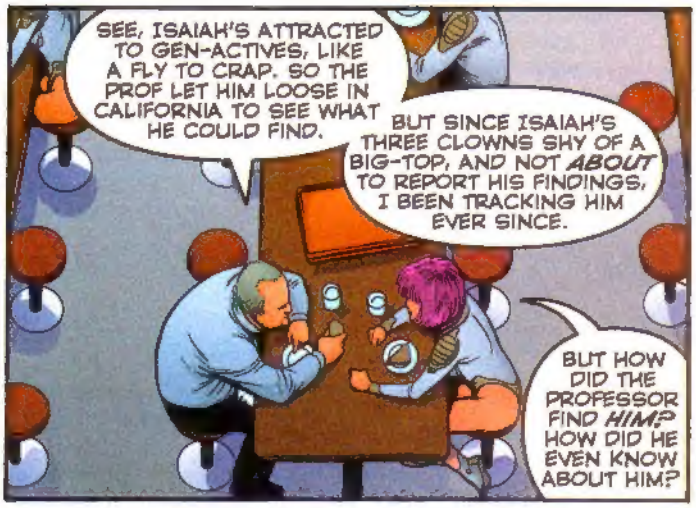
IS THAT SO? THEN I GUESS THEY FINALLY TURNED HIM INTO THE PERFECT SOLDIER.

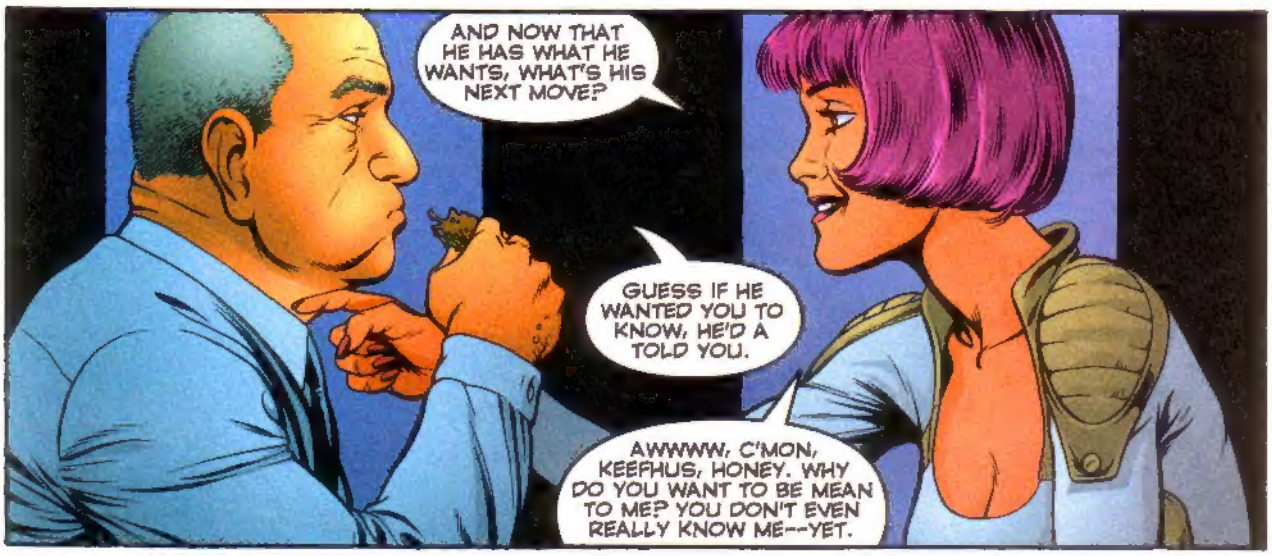
NOPE. I CAN'T MAKE A NEW HAND. JUST WON'T WORK NO MORE. GUESS I BLEW THE CIRCUITS, OR SOMETHING.
I DON'T LIKE YOU ALL ROCKY, GRUNGE. ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN'T TURN BACK INTO YOUR REGULAR FLESHY SELF?
SURE, I CAN DO THAT--BUT THEN THERE'D BE BLOOD SHOOTING OUTTA MY ARM. WHEN I GET MY HAND BACK, THAT'S WHEN THE FLESH RETURNS, BABE.

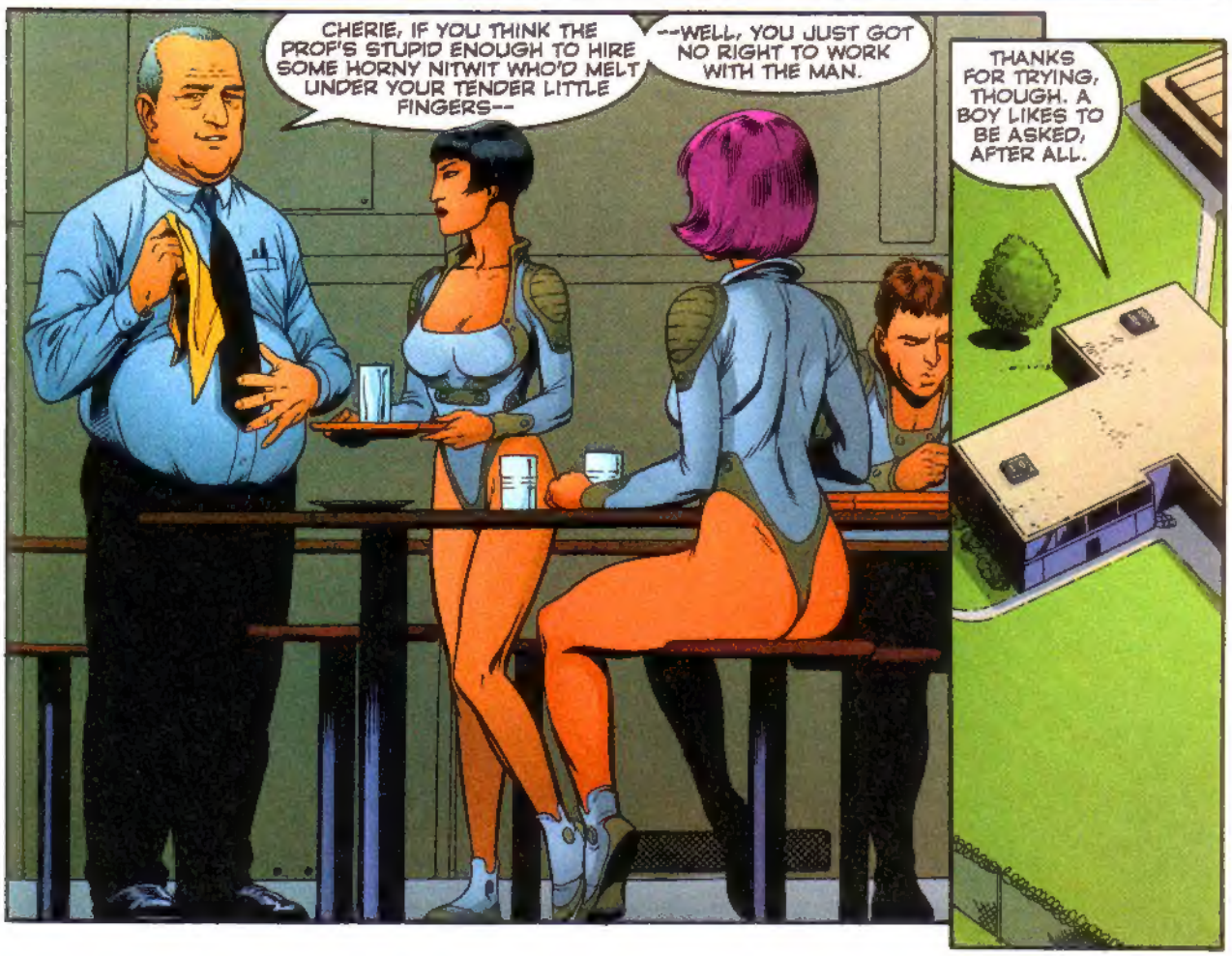

HEY, ROXY, I BEEN MEANING TO ASK YOU; WHERE WERE YOU THAT NIGHT LAST WEEK? WE COULDA USED YOUR HELP, YOU KNOW.
OH, I SEE. YOU AND BOBBY LEAD A KILLER ROBOT BACK TO OUR DOORSTEP, AND SOMEHOW IT'S *MY* FAULT?
HATE TO ADMIT IT, BUT SHE'S RIGHT, PAL. IF WE HAD BEEN A LITTLE MORE CAREFUL, NONE OF THIS WOULD HAVE HAPPENED.


NUH-UH, MAN. WE WAS JUST TRYING TO HELP OUT THAT ISAIAH DUDE.
IN FACT, THIS ALL GOES BACK TO THAT NIGHT IN FRONT OF THE RECORD STORE. I'M TELLIN' YOU, IT ALL GOES RIGHT BACK TO ISAIAH!
OKAY, FOR THE LAST TIME, WILL SOMEBODY PLEASE TELL ME WHO IS THIS ISAIAH!?


HE'S A HOUND DOG, THAT'S WHAT.
PLAIN AND SIMPLE, HE'S PROFESSOR TINDALOS' BLOOD HOUND.

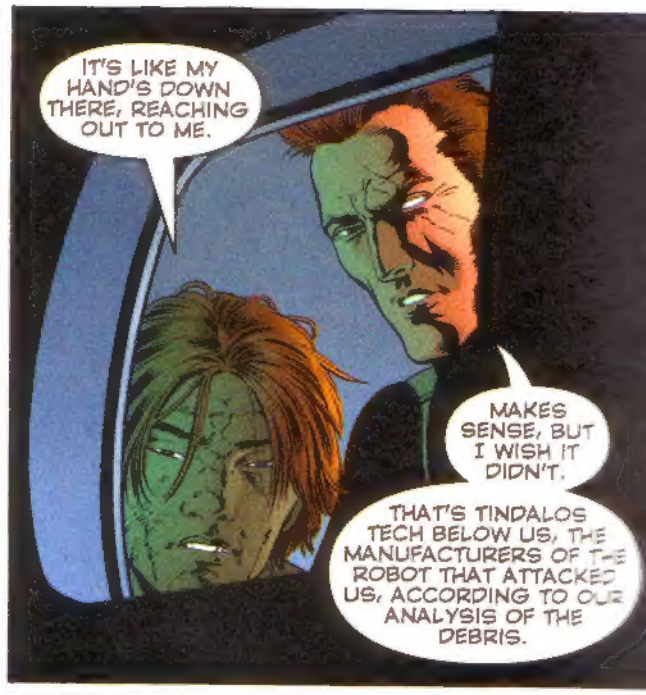

SEE, ISAIAH'S ATTRACTED TO GEN-ACTIVES, LIKE A FLY TO CRAP. SO THE PROF LET HIM LOOSE IN CALIFORNIA TO SEE WHAT HE COULD FIND.
BUT SINCE ISAIAH'S THREE CLOWNS SHY OF A BIG-TOP, AND NOT *ABOUT* TO REPORT HIS FINDINGS, I BEEN TRACKING HIM EVER SINCE.
BUT HOW DID THE PROFESSOR FIND *HIM*? HOW DID HE EVEN KNOW ABOUT HIM?


AND NOW THAT HE HAS WHAT HE WANTS, WHAT'S HIS NEXT MOVE?
GUESS IF HE WANTED YOU TO KNOW, HE'D A TOLD YOU.
AWWWW, C'MON, KEEFHUS, HONEY. WHY DO YOU WANT TO BE MEAN TO ME? YOU DON'T EVEN REALLY KNOW ME--YET.

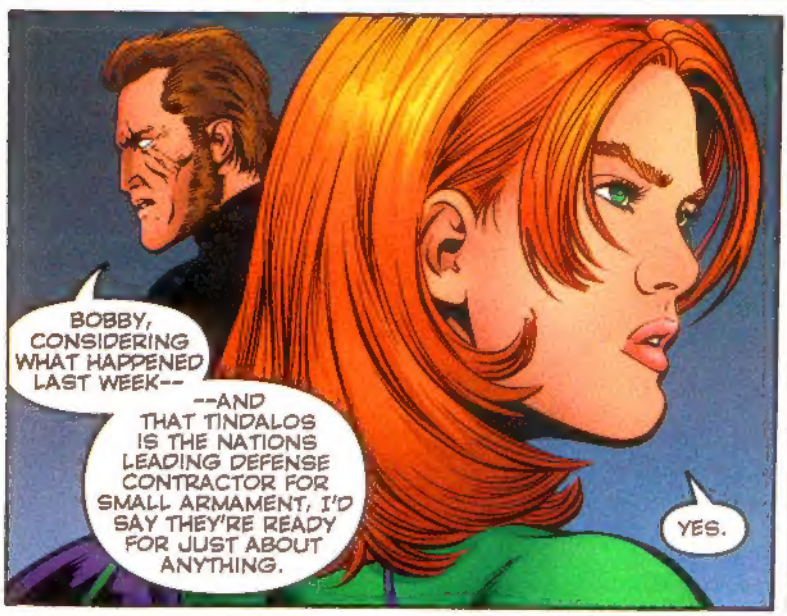

CHERIE, IF YOU THINK THE PROF'S STUPID ENOUGH TO HIRE SOME HORNY NITWIT WHO'D MELT UNDER YOUR TENDER LITTLE FINGERS--
--WELL, YOU JUST GOT NO RIGHT TO WORK WITH THE MAN.
THANKS FOR TRYING, THOUGH. A BOY LIKES TO BE ASKED, AFTER ALL.

DILSON, NORTH CAROLINA.
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?
ABSOLUTELY, MAN. NO DOUBT!

EVERY TIME WE PASS OVER THAT PLACE, MY ARM ITCHES LIKE CRAZY.


IT'S LIKE MY HAND'S DOWN THERE, REACHING OUT TO ME.
MAKES SENSE, BUT I WISH IT DIDN'T.
THAT'S TINDALOS TECH BELOW US, THE MANUFACTURERS OF THE ROBOT THAT ATTACKED US, ACCORDING TO OUR ANALYSIS OF THE DEBRIS.

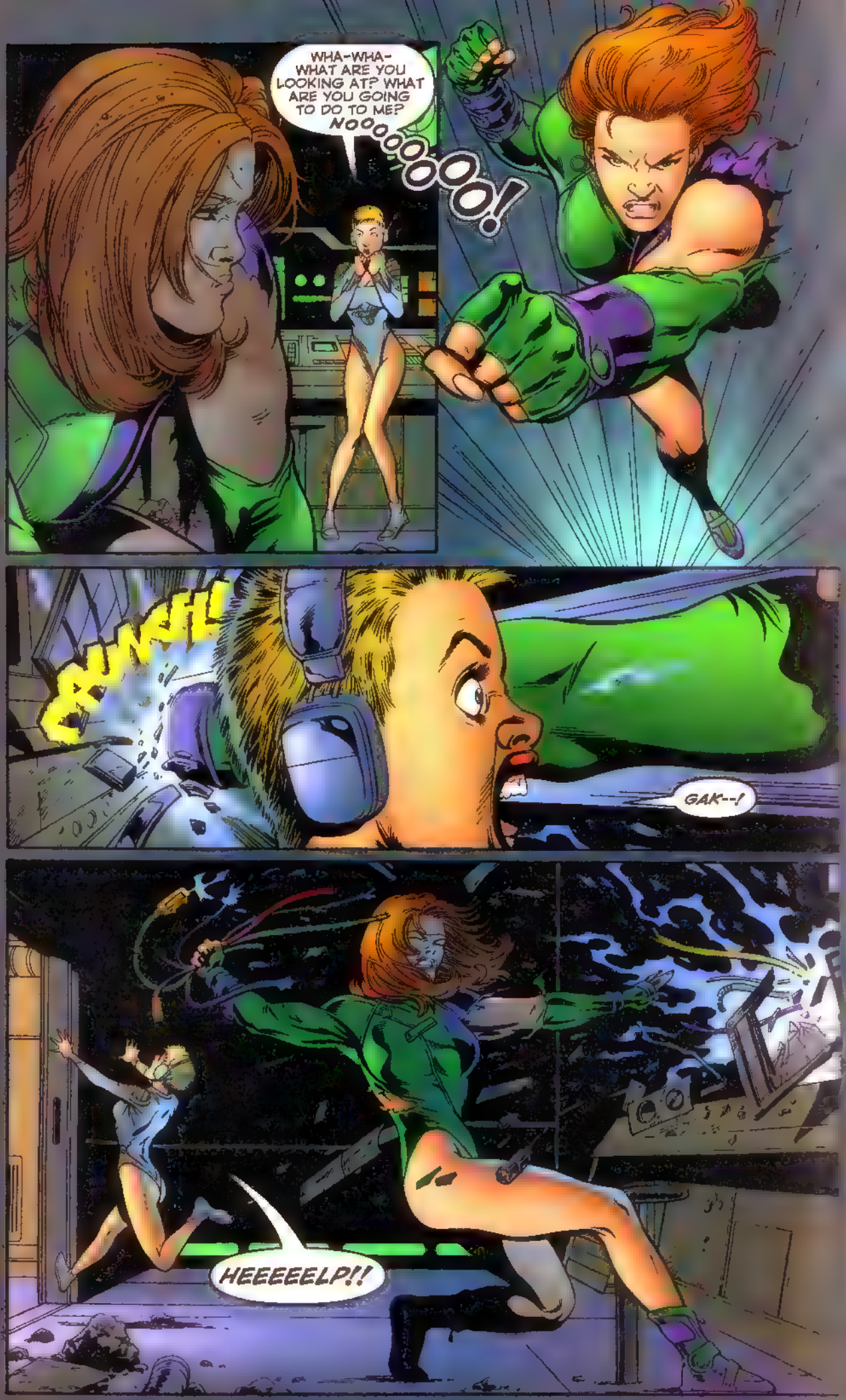
I FIGURED WE'D FLY DOWN HERE AND FIND OUT WHO THEY SOLD THE ROBOT TO. DIDN'T PLAN ON HAVING A SKIRMISH SO SOON.
TINDALOS TECH? DIDN'T THEY DESIGN THE PROTOTYPES FOR THE *KEEPERS* AND *BLACK HAMMERS*?
RIGHT. I'M NOT SURE WHY THEY'D WANT GRUNGE'S HAND, BUT WE'RE NOT READY TO FIND OUT. NOT JUST YET.
DO YOU REALLY THINK SOME CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS IS PREPARED FOR A SURPRISE COMMANDO-STYLE RAID?


BOBBY, CONSIDERING WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK--
--AND THAT TINDALOS IS THE NATIONS LEADING DEFENSE CONTRACTOR FOR SMALL ARMAMENT, I'D SAY THEY'RE READY FOR JUST ABOUT ANYTHING.
YES.

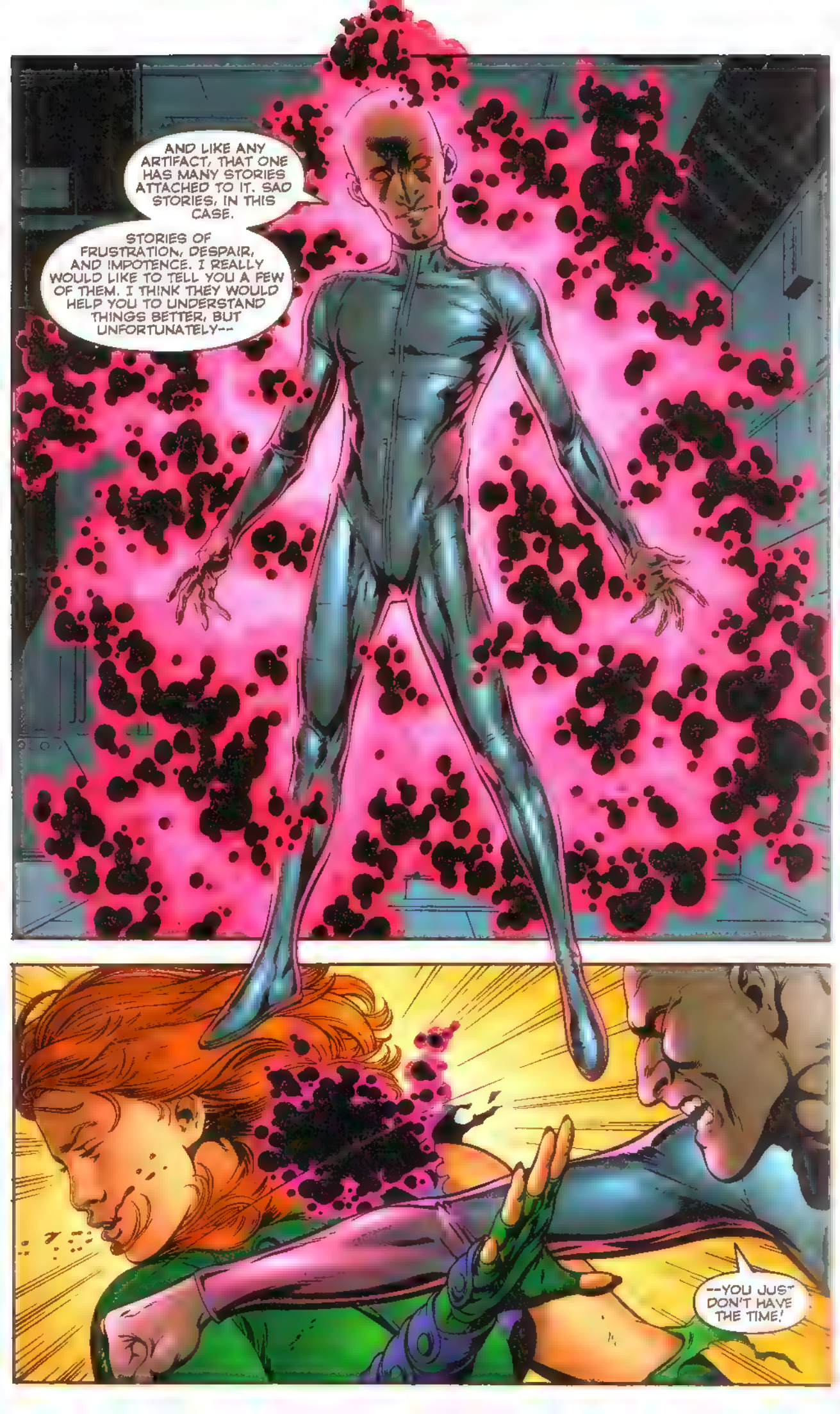
JUST ABOUT.

OKAY, THAT BOGIE APPEARS TO HAVE MOVED ON, BUT I'LL WAIT AND SEE IF SHE TAKES ANOTHER PASS.
PROBABLY JUST A FIGHTER JET, OR MAYBE SOME PRIVATE PLANE THAT'S LOST.

HOLD IT. WHAT THE--
WHAT'S WRONG? IS THE BOGIE BACK?
NEGATIVE. SOMETHING ELSE-- HEADING DOWN AT US --FAST! DAMN, I THINK IT'S A--

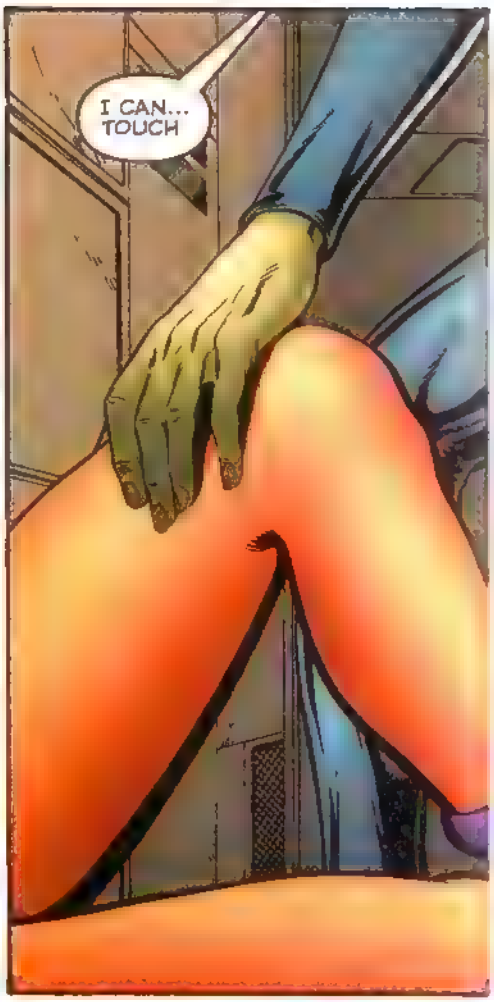

WHA-WHA-WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TO ME? NOOOOOOO!
CRUNCH!
GAK--!
HEEEEELP!!

WELL, THAT SHOULD HAVE KNOCKED OUT THE RADAR, THE PERIMETER SECURITY, AND PROBABLY SOME AUTOMATED DEFENSE SYSTEMS.
THE OTHERS SHOULD BE ABLE TO MOVE IN SAFELY.
WHOMP!
WHAT THE HECK IS THIS THING?
AN ARTIFACT, PRETTY GIRL.


AND LIKE ANY ARTIFACT, THAT ONE HAS MANY STORIES ATTACHED TO IT. SAD STORIES, IN THIS CASE.
STORIES OF FRUSTRATION, DESPAIR, AND IMPOTENCE. I REALLY WOULD LIKE TO TELL YOU A FEW OF THEM. I THINK THEY WOULD HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND THINGS BETTER, BUT UNFORTUNATELY--
--YOU JUST DON'T HAVE THE TIME!

MEANWHILE, SOMEWHERE IN THE MELANESIAN ISLANDS--
BAR
W.C.
--VODKA SOOTHES A SOUL SICKENED WITH GRIEF AND SELF-LOATHING--BUT ONLY A LITTLE.
TOO SHARPLY FELT IS EACH AND EVERY MISTAKE AND MISSTEP.
IN HIS TWENTY-ODD YEARS SINCE LEAVING THE ARMED FORCES, HE'S MADE ABOUT A MILLION.
A DAUGHTER. SHE OFFERED THE CHANCE TO CLEAN UP THE MESS OF HIS LIFE--A CHANCE HE HESITATED TO TAKE. ANOTHER MISTAKE.
AND NOW, WITH HER DEAD, IT'S TOO LATE TO DO ANYTHING--TO BE ANYBODY.
YOU ALEX FAIRCHILD?
ONCE, THIS MERCENARY WOULD HAVE REACTED WITH SUSPICION TO THAT QUESTION--SUSPICION AND A KNIFE, OR A GUN.
ONCE.
YEAH.
THIS IS FOR YOU.

I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW QUICKLY THE TRANSFORMATION TOOK PLACE. ALL THE PAIN IS GONE, ALL THE RIGIDITY, GONE INDEED, I AM REBORN.
I CAN BREATHE UNAIDED. I CAN WALK. I CAN TALK.

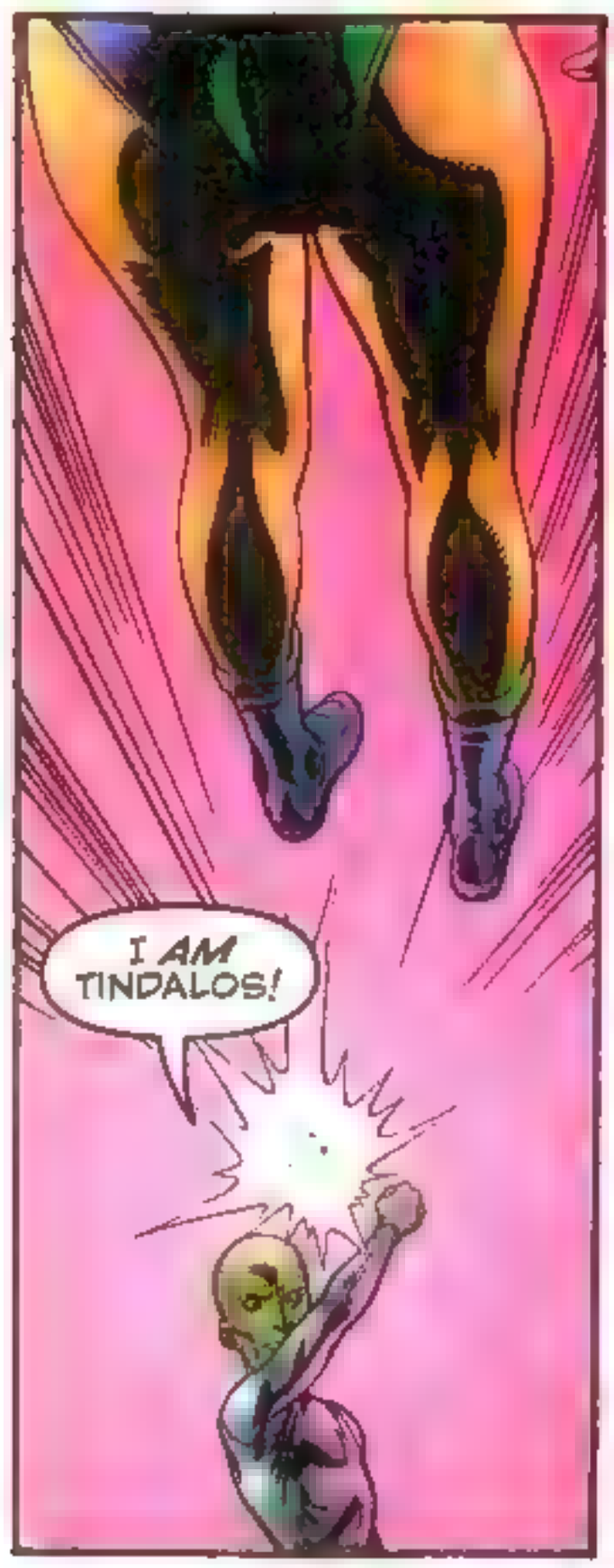

I CAN... TOUCH

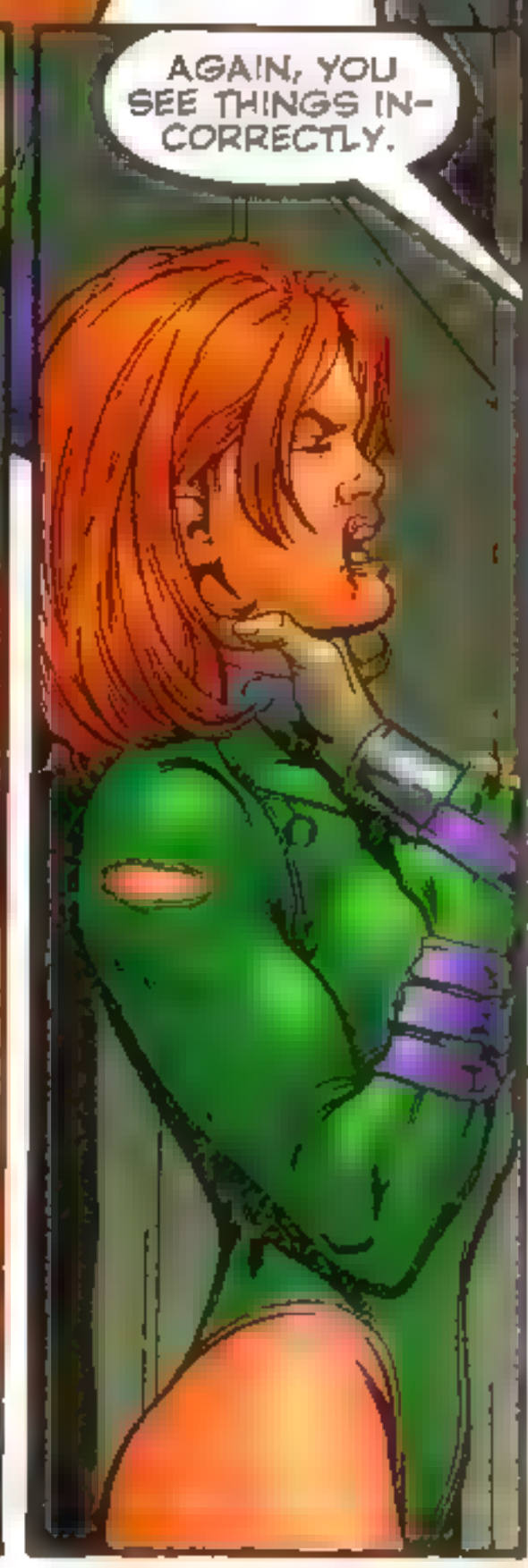
THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK!

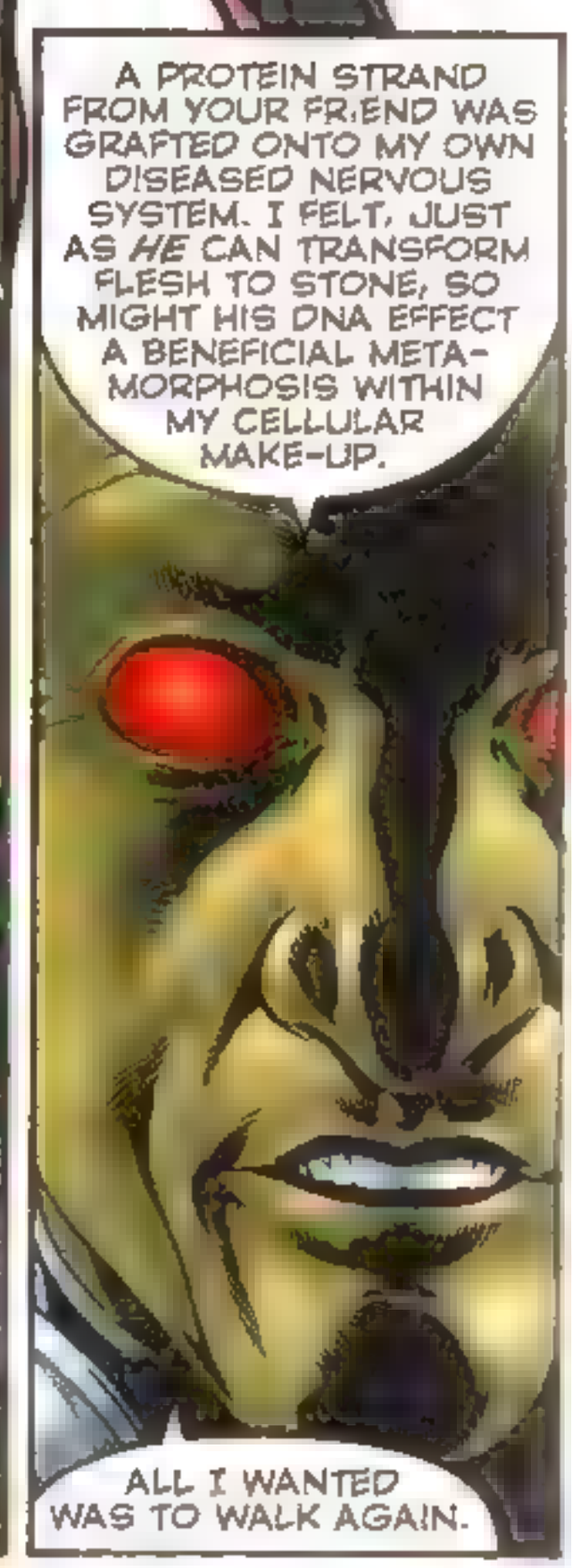
GUESS KAT DID HER JOB TAKING OUT THEIR DEFENSES AND COMMUNICATION CENTER.
WE TOOK THESE GUYS TOTALLY BY SURPRISE!
OKAY, GRUNGE. WE'RE INSIDE THE COMPOUND. YOU AND ROXY MAKE YOUR BREAK.
BUT REMEMBER, WE'RE HERE FOR THE HAND, NOTHING ELSE.
HE MEANS NO STOPS IN THE BATHROOM, PEANUT BLADDER.
"GOOD LUCK."
WHOA! KICKIN' WAVE ACTION, ROX!

GOOD LORD, THESE PUNCHES WOULD FLATTEN A TRUCK!! WHAT ARE YOU, TINDALOS TECH'S NEW SECRET WEAPON?

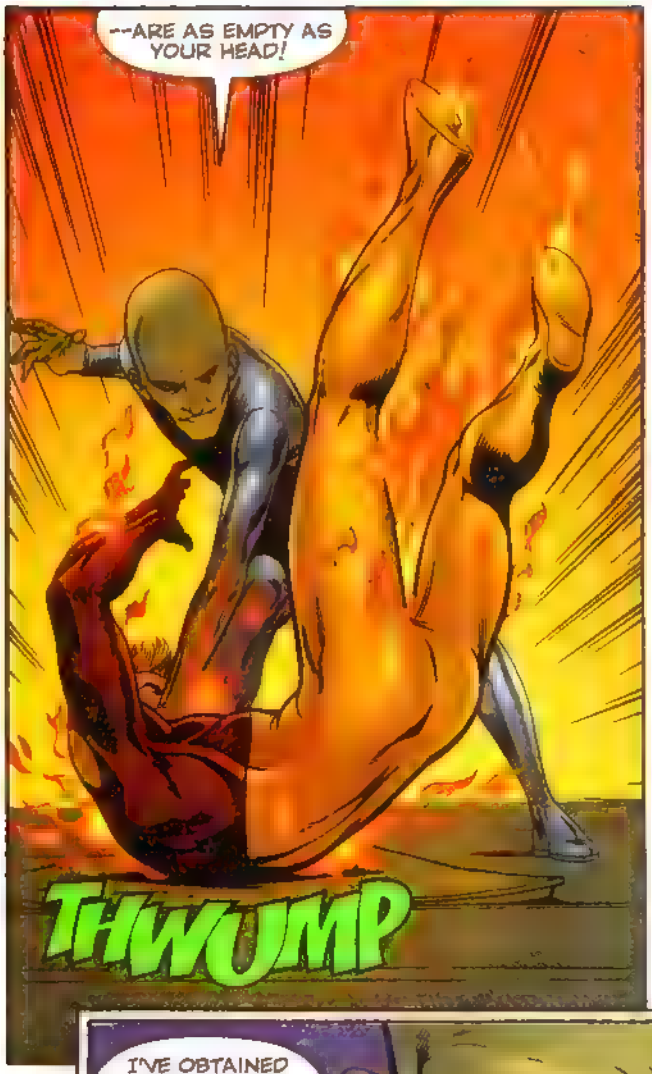
NOT AT ALL





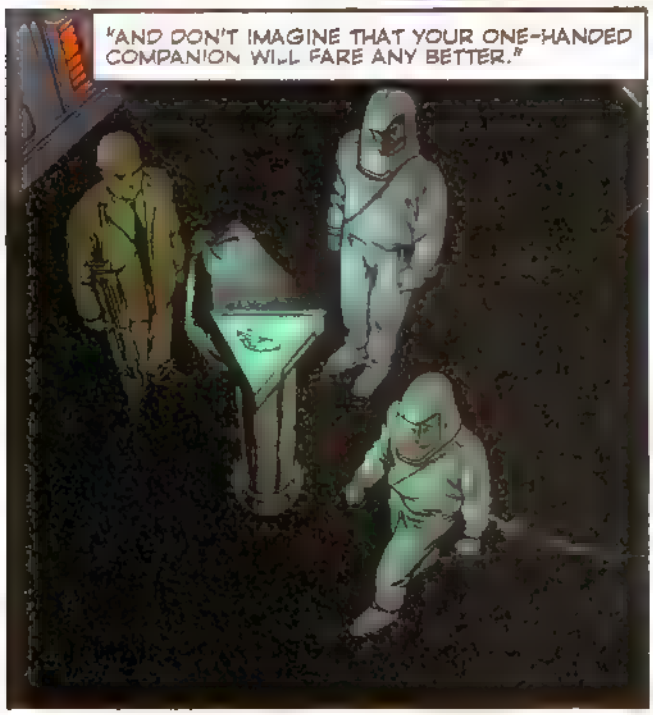


THIS AWESOME POWER I NOW POSSESS WAS MERELY A WELCOME BY-PRODUCT
WHAT A SHAME. THE FIRST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN I'VE BEEN ABLE TO TOUCH IN YEARS, AND I HAVE TO KILL HER.
OR DO I?
PUT IT BACK IN YOUR PANTS, CUE-BALL!
UNLESS YOU WANT ME TO BURN IT OFF!
HUH?!!!
HOW COLORFUL. BUT AS YOUR RED-TRESSED FRIEND HERE HAS ALREADY LEARNED, SUCH THREATS--


--ARE AS EMPTY AS YOUR HEAD!
THWUMP

I'M SORRY. I REALLY SHOULD EXERCISE A BIT MORE RESTRAINT AND COURTESY.
YOU WERE KIND ENOUGH TO COME ALL THIS WAY AND CHALLENGE ME, GIVE ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW OFF, AS IT WERE. THE LEAST I CAN DO IS EXPLAIN WHAT'S GOING ON.

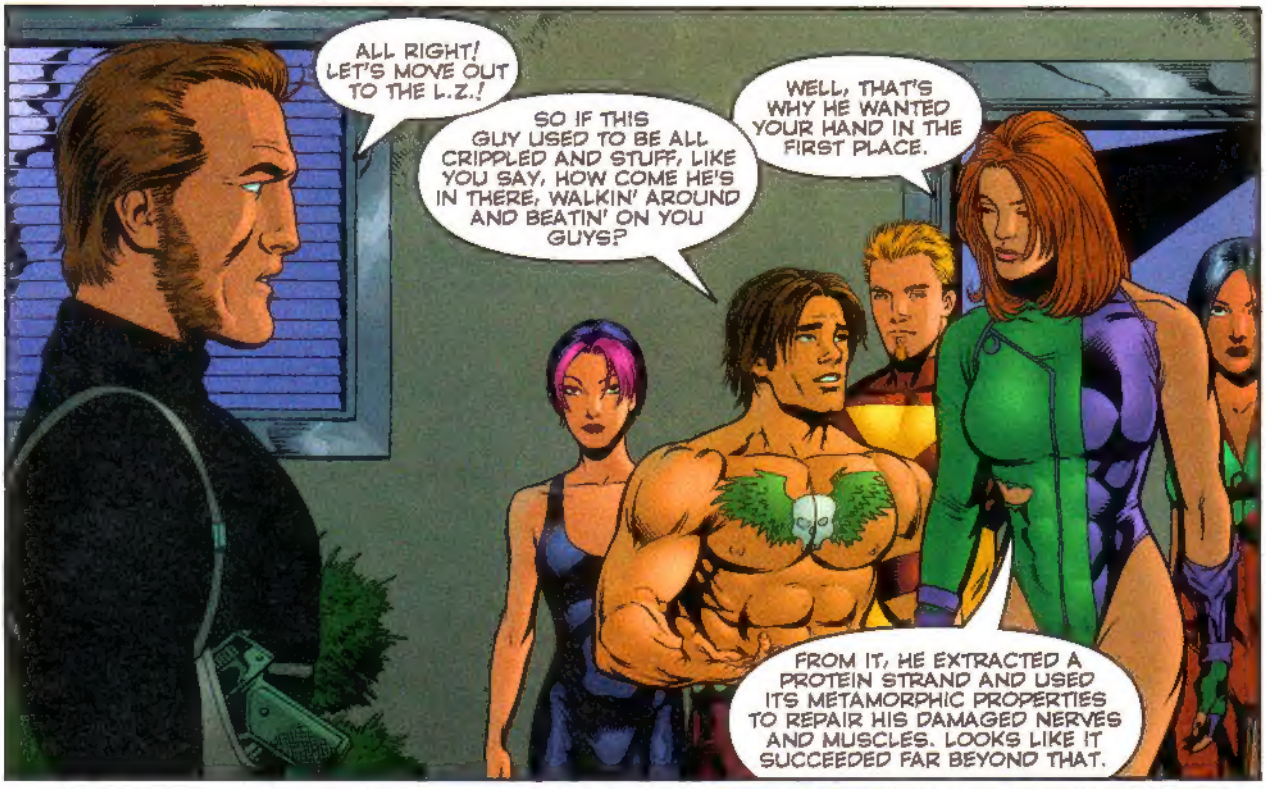
I'VE OBTAINED THE POWER TO CANCEL OUT *YOUR* POWERS. I'VE TESTED IT NEVER MIND HOW EXACTLY.
MY GEN-ACTIVE ENERGIES ACT AS A KIND OF LIGHTNING ROD TO YOUR ENERGIES-- DISSIPATING THEM, NEUTRALIZING THEM.
SUPER-STRONG WOMEN, AND FIRE BREATHING PUNKS? AGAINST ME, YOU'RE *NOTHING!*

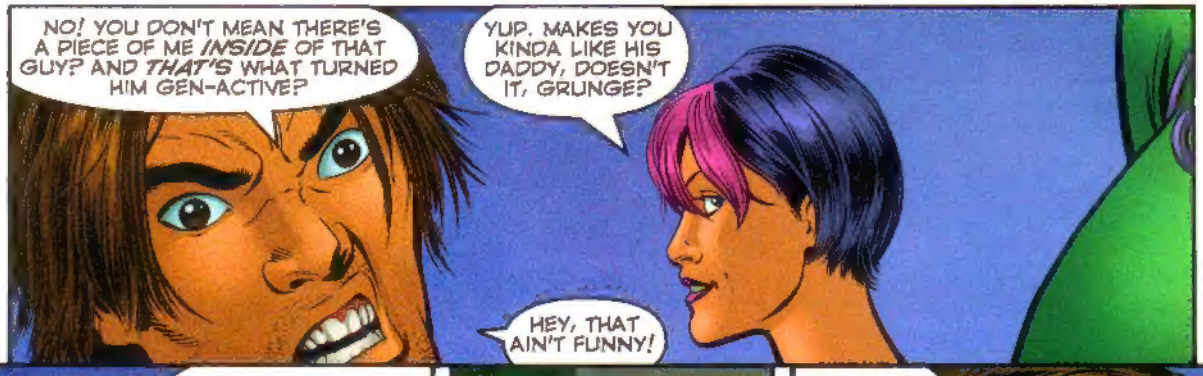

"AND DON'T IMAGINE THAT YOUR ONE-HANDED COMPANION WILL FARE ANY BETTER."

DAMMIT, KEEFHUS, IF YOU MUST STAND SO CLOSE TO THE SPECIMEN, YOU SHOULD WEAR A SURGICAL MASK
WHAT? AM I GONNA GIVE THAT #@*%ING HAND A COLD?

PROB'LY NOT, BUT I'D RATHER YOU DIDN'T BREATHE ON IT JUST THE SAME.
HEY, "ROCKY." I WAS HOPING YOU'D SHOW UP. WITH THAT BUMP ON THE HEAD YOU GAVE ME, I FIGGER I OWE YOU SOMETHING.
HONEY, YOU OUGHTA LEAVE THE ROOM. AFTER I BLAST YOUR BOYFRIEND TO DUST, IT AIN'T GONNA BE EASY TO BREATHE IN HERE.
OOH, YOU'RE PRETTY TOUGH, AREN'T YOU?
BUT I DON'T THINK YOU GOT ENOUGH GUN THERE.
IT'S WAAAAAY TOO LIGHT!
AND YOU HAVE REALLY GOT TO LOSE SOME WEIGHT, PORKY. REALLY, YOU DO.
I MEAN, YOU MUST WEIGH A TON!
CRAK
AWWWWW, MAN! HE'S OUT COLD! SHEEZ, ROX, WHY'D YOU DO THAT? I WANTED TO HIT HIM.
LOOK, HE DIDN'T SEEM TO KNOW WHO I WAS OR WHAT I COULD DO. I THOUGHT I COULD SURPRISE HIM, AND I DID. NOW GRAB THAT HAND. THIS ISN'T OVER YET.

YES, I'M SURE YOU ARE RIGHT. THAT GUN PROBABLY CAN HURT ME. BUT I DON'T THINK YOU'LL SHOOT. THIS BOY, HE'S TOO PRECIOUS TO YOU.
SO, I'M CURIOUS. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
KICK YOUR ASS! WHAT ELSE?
OWWW. Y-YOU'RE HURTING ME.
THAT'S THE WHOLE POINT, DILL-WEED!
BUT HOW? WHY CAN'T I ABSORB YOUR GEN-ACTIVE POWER?
DUDE, I AIN'T USING MY GEN-ACTIVE POWER!
WHACK!
TSSS! LOOKIT THIS. ANOTHER WIMP
THIS IS MY MOMENT TO GET SOME BIG-TIME REVENGE ON THE DUDE WHAT STOLE MY HAND, AND ALL I GET OUTTA IT IS ONE PUNCH!
WHAT A GYP!


ALL RIGHT! LET'S MOVE OUT TO THE L.Z.!
SO IF THIS GUY USED TO BE ALL CRIPPLED AND STUFF, LIKE YOU SAY, HOW COME HE'S IN THERE, WALKIN' AROUND AND BEATIN' ON YOU GUYS?
WELL, THAT'S WHY HE WANTED YOUR HAND IN THE FIRST PLACE.
FROM IT, HE EXTRACTED A PROTEIN STRAND AND USED ITS METAMORPHIC PROPERTIES TO REPAIR HIS DAMAGED NERVES AND MUSCLES. LOOKS LIKE IT SUCCEEDED FAR BEYOND THAT.


NO! YOU DON'T MEAN THERE'S A PIECE OF ME *INSIDE* OF THAT GUY? AND *THAT'S* WHAT TURNED HIM GEN-ACTIVE?
YUP. MAKES YOU KINDA LIKE HIS DADDY, DOESN'T IT, GRUNGE?
HEY, THAT AIN'T FUNNY!

CAITLIN? THAT WAS A GREAT IDEA YOU HAD, USING YOUR BODY AS A BOMB ON THEIR RADAR TOWER.
I THINK THAT WAS A REALLY GUTSY MOVE. I JUST WANTED YOU TO HEAR ME SAY THAT.

YOU KNOW ME, MR. LYNCH.
?

I'M TOUGH AS NAILS.

OHHHHH. WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE DID...
NOW I RECALL. THAT BOY. THE ONE WHOSE HAND I STOLE. HE WAS THE PROBLEM.
I'LL HAVE TO MAKE KILLING HIM A PRIORITY.
UHN!
CHUNK
MY LEGS...WHY ARE THEY SO WEAK? I--I CAN BARELY MOVE.
KEEFHUS!! KEEFHUS, CAN YOU HEAR ME?
CHERIE?
...ANYBODY?
THE END.